

Record price spurs rare coin market

By Roger Boye

The record-setting coin auction in Chicago earlier this month has invigorated an already strong market for extremely rare coins.

Dealers attending the July 7 sale suggested that the new auction record—\$990,000 for an 1804 U.S. silver dollar—likely will be broken in the next two years.

“Wall Street has discovered rare coins and that’s bullish for the market,” said a Chicago investor who asked that his name not be used. “We’re going to see more sales in this [price] range as the new money comes in.”

The man who bought the 1804 dollar, Hugh J. Sconyers of Beverly Hills, Calif., manages the American Rare Coin Fund limited partnership. It was formed earlier this year with the investment firm of Kidder, Peabody & Co. as general partner.

Bidding on the 1804 dollar—one of 15 known—opened at \$375,000 and advanced to \$900,000 in about a minute, mostly in \$25,000 increments. Sconyers received a round of applause from the nearly 200 people in a downtown hotel ballroom after he submitted his winning bid. (He was charged the \$900,000 gavel price plus a 10 percent buyer’s fee, which is standard in such auctions.)

The \$990,000 ranks as the most ever paid for a single coin at public auction. The old record was set at a New York sale in November 1979 when a gold Brasher doubloon sold for \$725,000.

Winchester, Ind., coin dealer Leon E. Hendrickson, who owned the 1804 dollar, admitted that he had wanted his coin to be



This 1804 U.S. silver dollar was sold at auction for \$990,000.

the first to cross the \$1 million mark. Hendrickson and another man bought the 1804 dollar for \$500,000 in 1985, and Hendrickson had since become its sole owner.

Eight of the coins known today—including the record-setting dollar—were created in the 1830s for inclusion in special coin sets and the other seven in the 1850s for sale to collectors.

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The U.S. Senate has approved by unanimous consent a bill calling for new designs on the tails sides of the five circulating coin types—cent through half dollar.

At least 260 of 435 lawmakers are co-sponsoring similar legislation that’s pending in the U.S. House. Some hobbyists are predicting that the proposal will become law by late August.

Book Reviews in Tempo

The following books are scheduled to be reviewed on page 3 of Tempo this week:

Monday: **Stonewall Jackson: Portrait of a Soldier**, John Bowers

Tuesday: **Hollywood**, Charles Bukowski

Wednesday: **Life with a Star**, Jiri Weil

Thursday: **Mazes**, Hugh Kenner

Friday: **One Woman’s Army**, Charity Adams Earley